



ROLES OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN PROMOTION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This research highlighted on Roles of Social Entrepreneurs in promoting rural development in Nigerian with the aim of establishing the linkages between social entrepreneurs and rural development, role of Social Entrepreneurs towards enabling new businesses in the community thereby reducing societal and economic problems in the community. Social Entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems. They are persistent and ambitious, tackle major issues and offer new ideas for a wide scale change. The methodology adapted Secondary sources of data such as Review of the Literatures on related studies, Internet, Focus Group Discussion and Visitation to some communities. Findings showed that rural entrepreneurship can help increase output, create employment and reduce rural urban migration among other things. The paper recommends that Social entrepreneurs should be sustained in the society, concerned authorities should Support Match Trading grants to help propel new funding model to achieve greater impact. Government should remove barriers to obtaining finances; since inaccessibility to finance is the biggest barricade for social enterprises. This will certainly ensure empowerment to create change and help people realize they can lead change in their community, regardless of their background.

Keywords: *Social Entrepreneurs, Social Entrepreneurship, Sustainable Rural Development.*

INTRODUCTION

One of the important concepts of sustainable socio-economic development of rural areas is social entrepreneurship; generally, entrepreneurship refers to skills competence, innovation, creativeness, personal initiative, community management of jobs, business

opportunities or simply put as 'Self-Reliance' (Minaba, 2011). Albert, (2000) in his definition sees entrepreneurship as ownership and operation of a small business. Holt, (2005) sees entrepreneur as an individual who organizes a business undertaking and assuming the risk for the sake of the profit. Mensah, (1990) and Kwaido(2010) agreed that with high pressure on the economy, there is need for more entrepreneurial integration into Nigerian economic community. Suleiman (2006) wrote entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek for investment opportunities, to establish and to run an enterprise successfully. The entrepreneurship spirit is a pre-requisite to an entrepreneurial society and culture. This spirit is required for the overall economic growth of any nation especially developing ones like Nigeria. This is in line with the view of Nwangwu (2006) that entrepreneurship is the willingness and the ability of an individual or a firm or an organization to identify an environmental change and exploit such an opportunity to produce goods and services for public consumption. In the words of Dangote as stated by Odjegba (2005) entrepreneurship is built on vision, focus and determination.

It is noteworthy that the present generation of entrepreneurs have a great attraction to entrepreneurship as they provide creative solutions to society's most pressing social issues. It is a way for entrepreneurs to feel the resounding impact of doing something good for the rural settlers while turning a profit. Accordingly, some entrepreneurs start businesses to improve the quality of their life, others seek to work for themselves and yet some simply see an opportunity in the market that they cannot resist. But sometimes the inspiration is the desire to use business as a means of creating positive change in the rural areas. Based on the importance of entrepreneurship the Federal Government of Nigeria incorporated it into all programmes of tertiary institutions in the country in 2006 (Minaba2011). Though, there is no fixed consensus on the definition of social entrepreneurship but it was accepted by many scholars as a non-profit charitable work carried out by voluntary sector organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), social activist and environmentalist among others. However, an attempt by scholars such as Bornstein, (2007) regarded Social Entrepreneurship as a social innovation, while others (Yunus, 2007; Abu Sarfan, 2012) viewed Social entrepreneurship as an approach to business that is gaining popularity as more people ask themselves this simple question, 'What can I do for the world today?' Based on this question nowadays social entrepreneurship is

facilitated by internet, social networking and social media websites in order to reach large number of people not geographically nearby, Social Entrepreneurs are of common goals and this encourage them to collaborate, organize, learn, disseminate information about groups events, activities and raise fund through crowd funding(Annon,2019)

According to the National Strategy for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2020, the lack of employment is one of the main reasons of poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, a priority is the promoting of active inclusion of those utmost from the labour market economically inactive young people, long-term unemployed, people on social assistance, with primary or lower education and no professional qualifications or lack of key competencies, people with permanent disabilities, elderly workers and others. Through the development of viable social enterprises, the state can facilitate access to employment and provide support for the social inclusion of vulnerable groups by creating appropriate conditions for their professional integration in the social economy (Bench Eva et al., 2016). The strategy of the Operational Program "Human Resources Development" 2014 – 2020 justify that critical to tackling poverty, and social exclusion is the implementation of social policies that give people access to economic opportunities and the necessary knowledge and skills to utilize the opportunities. This creates preconditions for overcoming poverty and social exclusion, dependency on social protection system, vulnerability to adverse events of economic or social nature. The implementation of such active social policies must consider not only national also local specifics and characteristics (Terziev,2015). Here the important is the role of social entrepreneurs in solving the problems of poverty and social exclusion, especially characteristic for rural areas. It is important in rural areas to create suitable conditions for building social enterprises with a wide range, including all vulnerable groups of the territory. In this connection, this study aims at revealing the role and benefits of social entrepreneurs for sustainable rural development through analysis of the factors and barriers to its application.

The current study aims to unveil the role and benefits of social entrepreneurs for sustainable rural development through analysis of the aspects and blockades to its application. It is important in rural areas to create suitable conditions for building social enterprises with a large scope covering all vulnerable groups of the area. Some of the most important

factors, challenges, and constraints that have been analyzed are economic, social and institutional. Finally, Conclusion and recommendation were made. The results show that sustainable rural development can be achieved in solving socially significant problems with the means and approaches of social entrepreneurship and its promotion in rural areas.

The methodology adapted centres on Secondary sources of data such as Review of the Literatures on related studies, Internet (Journals, Books and related Documents), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Visitation to some communities.

CONCEPT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

Currently, social entrepreneurship is a revolution across the world, people from all walks of life are creating and implementing effective, innovative and sustainable solutions to battle social and environmental challenges, these solutions include services and products for profit and non-profit initiative. Social Entrepreneurs are pressure groups who transform innovations into economic goods using financial and business acumen thus, promoting development in rural communities. A successful entrepreneur is one who translates words into action, in other words commit to action, as a social entrepreneur, you have to define your goals so you can realistically implement them. Good intentions that could change communities for the better are always there. But when ideas are too big or do not address a very specific need, good intentions are just not enough. An action plan needs to be more than just a rubber stamp. You need rounds of analysis of the geographic region and its regulations to find the optimal solution. Hanke, (1987) Hemming and Manzoor (1988) and Ndongko (1991) opined that entrepreneurs are more probable to produce superior results in any community. Need Assessment constantly evaluate what is missing. Brainstorm different pain points from various communities across the globe. You might find that you are passionate about poverty in the Community, or that you are passionate about helping a local homeless shelter. Either way, make sure to validate your idea through data and research. The issue should be prevalent, the scope of the project should fall within your budget and energy level, and the community should be truly interested. Identify the cause of the problem; Now that you have figured out what is missing, ask yourself why it is missing. If there is already a solution in place, why is it not working? Does the problem lack a business or procedure to deliver the solution? Assessing where the problem stems from will uncover fitting solutions.

As a successful social entrepreneur learn and understand the history: How has the problem been addressed before? Sometimes, opportunities are time dependent. The historical record may suggest solutions that have not worked in the past, but may work now or could be altered. You should not underestimate strength in numbers. Make sure to win enough support from the community to make the project viable. Creating a new system requires a strong alliance of talented individuals and businesses. By reaching out to community members, those who will benefit from the solution and have something to contribute, you will strengthen your social venture. As a social entrepreneur, you have learned how to innovate and use whatever tools you need to succeed in the for-profit world. Bring those along on your journey to foster a better planet.

In order to be successful in their task Social entrepreneurs adopt a business model that bring value to their mission in consideration of its ability to;

- Generate profit for its owners
- Generate positive change in the Rural Areas and
- Achieve a balance of profit and positive change.

The first approach above applies to traditional for-profit companies, the second applies to traditional charities while the third applies to social enterprises-signifying a balance between profit and positive change. In line with the definition, a social business model is a framework that a social business follows in order to bring about a positive change while maintaining healthy financial returns. Yet despite sharing this basic framework, social entrepreneurs have a wide spectrum of viable social business models to choose from. Wolfgang Grassi in 2012 identified types of Social Business Models and began his analysis with three factors guiding any social business: the mission, integration type and the target population. He then discovered the technique in which these three factors crossed with the three traditional categories of business (for-profit, not-for-profit and hybrids) to generate the types of social business models that any social enterprise could adopt.

Social Entrepreneurs and Socio-Economic Opportunity

The young people of today are so concerned with making positive impact on the community as they are with making money thus, Social entrepreneurs can engage the community into development process that

will serve as engine of economic growth, proving effective strategy for tackling unemployment, adaptation of technologies etc. (World Bank, 2001; Kwaido, 2010) For entrepreneurs to flourish it requires their imagination, coordination and hard work (Albert, 2000). Social enterprise has taken off as a new way for success, merging capitalism with a philanthropist mentality. These self-funding, for-profit businesses also have a task to tackle universal issues such as alleviating hunger, improving education, and fighting climate change.

Accordingly, the aim of social enterprises is a cheap advantage that can help them stand out in a jam-packed market. It also tries to show how social enterprises accept a model which donates a portion of profits to a cause, creating jobs within the local communities, using their carbon footprint and educating customers about it, impart skills and allow people to build better lives for themselves and their communities, advocating for assortment and inclusion and becoming an engine of motivation. Social Entrepreneurs are mostly very passionate about what they do for a living because it allows them to live their passion, embracing a career with meaning. Hence, this paper deemed it necessary to confer, the social entrepreneurship as a measure to supplementing justifiable rural development in Nigeria, in the intellect that, social entrepreneurship stands to bringing value within society, with main focus on people and development, rather than profit. This paper aimed to understand the role of social entrepreneurship in enabling new business model in the community, consequently reducing social and economic problems in the society, and highlights on how social entrepreneurship enables business opportunities thrives in the community, investigates the role of social entrepreneurship as measures for enhancing rural transformation and sustainable development in Nigeria. Objectively this paper highlights social enterprise and their impact as well as its suitability for grant, investment opportunities that are geared towards job formation and sustainability.

Social entrepreneurship has a host of definitions for instance, Mort, Weerawardena and Carnegie (2002) wrote that social entrepreneurship is multidimensional and covers business activities in achieving social mission. Social entrepreneurship is often described as people's action for change using principles and entrepreneurial models to meet social needs, to address social problems, and to maintain social values. This can be done through the use of innovation to create products, services and new

economic markets (Dees & Anderson, 2006; Dees, 1998). For all these to be achieved in a community there should be provision of relevant infrastructure, working materials, simplified registration and business procedures, supervision etc. (Kwaido, 2010)

Truran (2014) says, Social entrepreneurs are those individuals who have created a new way of using their existing and latent entrepreneurial skills to address opportunities and the challenges of social issues that surround them. This tells us the over-jealousness of social entrepreneurs to see that the social challenges confronting society are being tackled through their latent skills and resources. Accordingly, Social entrepreneurship is a new method for success, merging capitalism with a philanthropist mentality. It has received a lot of attention in recent times. It has been advertised by many as the means of conveying real and lasting change to a wrecked and heartbroken world. Social entrepreneurship is a way of inventing new answers to the world's major problems; certainly, it is quietly becoming the most influential business model of the 21st Century. The pure scale of providing solutions to these types of problems have the world's leading policy makers that asserts Social Entrepreneurship will become the most focused, money-making and pertinent business model of our time.

Roles of Social Entrepreneurs in Promotion of Rural Development in Nigeria

Social entrepreneurs are well known to dedicating themselves to solving the world's biggest challenges through ground-breaking new solutions and purpose-driven organisations. Indeed, Social entrepreneurs influence both the cash flow and technology-based solutions of their profit-making enterprises by linking them directly to existing non-profit organisations to create a new model for sustainable global change. Social enterprise is a type of business where the bottom line and success metrics are measured in more than just profits, but success based on a triple bottom line;

- Social impact of the business, and its ability to change lives and develop a community in a sustainable way.
- Environmental impact, how it contributes to a sustainable planet or reduces the carbon footprint of the business and its customers.
- Traditional businesses, they need to make money in order to sustain themselves, pay workers and grow as an enterprise.

Apart from using their skills to benefit a cause, the present generation of entrepreneurs are more concern with making positive impact on the

world as well as making money. Prominent social entrepreneurs in the recent time include Pakistan Akhter Hammed Khan, Bangladeshi Muhammad Yunus (Social entrepreneurs' leader in south Asia), and founder of Grameen Bank pioneer of microcredit provider across Asia, Africa, and Latin American countries. Martin and Osberg, (2007) Social Entrepreneurship competes favourably in the market place with all other competitors but is inspired by a set of social objectives. This is the rationale for being in the business (Yunus, 2007) thus, Social Entrepreneurs are always trying to predict, address and creatively respond to future problems, seek to transform societies at large, rather than transferring their profit margin as classical seek to do (John Hartigan and Parmela, 2008).

In the same vein, Wue et al (2005) predicated that typically Social Entrepreneurs are ordinary people who find ground-breaking solutions to society's social problems. They use out-dated entrepreneurial models to bring social or community benefits. Social Entrepreneurs often have a personal experience of the need they are addressing and as such they are exceptionally positioned to address some of our most pressing social challenges. They are obsessive, ambitious and steadfast. Social Entrepreneurs often go where Non-Profits and Government Organisations cannot go due to lack of funds, organisation and invention. Attacking issues globally like poverty, malnutrition, clean air and water, and health care are opening to an exciting new business strategy for altering the world called, Social Entrepreneurship.

Social entrepreneurs devote themselves to solving the world's biggest challenges through pioneering new solutions and purpose-driven organisations. Social entrepreneurs leverage both the cash flow and technology-based solutions of their for-profit enterprises by linking them directly to existing not-for-profit organisations to create a new model for sustainable global change. The pure degree of providing solutions to these types of problems have the world's leading policy makers stating that Social Entrepreneurship will become the most determined, lucrative and applicable business model of our time. Wue *et al*, (2005) enumerated Social entrepreneurs into (a) community-based entrepreneurs (b) socially based entrepreneurs (c) social services industry professionals and (d) socio-economic entrepreneurs.

Social entrepreneurship has to a greater extent transformed community from Rural to Urban centres without necessarily putting pressure on the government of the day. Social Entrepreneurs have raised the living standard of populace by bringing closer services that governments would not or take decades to provide. A visitation to some communities in Sokoto State clearly shows the presence of Social Entrepreneurs driven infrastructures (Schools, Hospitals, Electricity, Water, Housing Estates and Roads) at Kwalkwalawa village (Wamakko Local Government Area) and Madorawa village (Bodinga Local Government Area) located near the Usmanu Danfodiyo University and Sokoto State University respectively. The presence of these infrastructures, courtesy of the locational factors of these institutions, were felt as it culminated to the rapid expansion of these villages that can today boast of structures that even their respective Local Government headquarters lacked. The housing estate in the areas were built to complement those at the main campuses and rented out to some permanent staff, petty business traders and students from within and outside Sokoto. Similarly, the structures go along side provision of water, electricity and roads. There is no gainsaying the fact that the benefits of social enterprise cannot by any means be overemphasized.

While social enterprises dedicate a portion of their profits to the impact they want to make, they do enjoy the following benefits that help them succeed:

- A company with a cause at its core makes consumers feel good about every purchase;
- Partner with other non-profit organizations and for-profit companies to leverage existing audiences and established reputations to create a presence in their market;
- Publications and blogs love to cover social enterprises and their impact, helping them to spread their efforts and share their impact;
- Social enterprises can be eligible for grants, investment opportunities that focus on job creation and sustainability, and special certifications

The activity of social enterprises is expressed in the provision of goods or services in a competitive market in an entrepreneurial way. Very often economic activity covers the delivery of services of general interest such as social, health, educational, etc. and very often they are in their essence a social innovation. It is possible that the goods and services are not in themselves directly for the needs of vulnerable groups, but the results or

revenues to be in direct benefit or directly to support vulnerable groups and to solve socially significant problem.

Most of the profit of the enterprise is reinvested into the activity itself and not being distributed to private shareholders or owners. Social enterprises are institutionally independent of the authorities at Federal and or Local level, Internal management of social enterprises include mechanisms for participation in the decision-making of representatives of vulnerable groups (such as its employees, users, members) for which it exists or the basis of the mechanism of control laid down the principle of social justice. Internal control is based on the principles of representativeness and transparency. (Terziev et al., 2016e).

Social Entrepreneurs adopt a mission to create and sustain social value, further they recognize and relentlessly pursue new opportunities which serve the mission. They also engage in a process of continues innovation, adaptation and learning, act boldly without being limited by the resources in hand and finally exhibit heightened accountability to the constituencies served and also the outcomes created. Social entrepreneurs serve as tool for sustainable rural development.

Social Entrepreneurs and Sustainable Rural Development

The changes in living conditions depend on a variety of factors such as improvement in education, health, water supply, feeder road networks, electrification amongst others. Provision of these infrastructures does not necessarily depend on government alone, but by any other development partners and stakeholders. Social entrepreneurs are important partners in that respect in Nigeria, as they are basically out to provides social change and services in the society side by side with government. Effective rural development lies in implementation of the programmes and policies initiated. This has been the problem in Nigeria; in the sense that successive government came up with various programmes that were laudable but spoiled with implementation problems which left rural communities undeveloped. Any effort therefore, by social entrepreneurs is appreciative to complementing government effort, due to lop-sidedness and inconsistency in policy and program execution in Nigeria. Baldock, Dwyer, Lome, Peterein and Ward (2001) upheld that: Sustainability concepts in rural development seeks to bridge not only the conventional divide between economic development and environmental protection, but also embraces the viability of localities and communities on which the

maintenance of both the environment and economic activity ultimately depends. The self-funding, for-profit businesses also have a mission to tackle global issues such as alleviating hunger, improving education, and combatting climate change. To achieve their high-minded goals, the companies might fund specific programs, partner with governments or existing philanthropic entities, or follow a one-for-one donation model, and work on either the local or international level. Several leading social entrepreneurs are incredibly enthusiastic about what they do for a living because it allows them to live their passion, embracing a career with meaning. The ways you can make a difference are as numerous as the problems that need solutions.

Generally, the contribution of social enterprises to the socio-economic development of rural areas can be viewed from different perspectives:

- Provision of access to basic services (social, educational and health) of local communities, including the most vulnerable groups;
- Contributing to a more balanced use of local resources, and with the support of stakeholders, which promotes inclusive governance models that enable local communities in making strategic decisions;
- Supporting the creation of new jobs as a result of offering new services provided to people with disabilities;
- Inclusion in the labor market of minority groups, single women, people with disabilities and others remaining excluded from opportunities to generate incomes

Barriers and Limitations of Social Entrepreneurs

In the cause of their activities, Social enterprises are faced with series of problems which include among others; Lack of adequate financing, scarcity of resources for starting a business, inadequate managerial and marketing experience, shortage of resistance on the project financing model, nonexistence of sufficient incentives related to the supply of products of social enterprises in the market, absence of training and motivation of people working in social enterprises and those who wish to take up a job there, deficiency of systematic and deliberate policy at the national level and dearth of legislation.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that, unless there are deliberate attempts by government to creating enabling environment for smooth and successful engagements and collaborations with the social entrepreneurs to meeting the rural

needs; all efforts and governmental strides to ensuring speedy rural transformation and sustainable development will remain slow and unattained. We believe this endorsement from government will benefit the whole social enterprise sector, and help us secure the partnerships we need to support people. Authorities should Support Match Trading grants to help propel this new funding model to achieve even greater impact. Engage with the development of Match Trading to further benefit civil society, and consult with Entrepreneurship Development Centers in our Tertiary Institutions. Support those creating change in their local communities; Advocating for regional and local hubs of learning and connection, which are able to bring together diverse groups of people from specific communities to lead change together.

To attain this status, social enterprise has to be taken as a new formula for success, combining capitalism with a do-gooder mentality. Social Entrepreneurs connects the settlers to life purposes, keeps them motivated, brings lasting happiness, it also helps one to support others discover their life resolution and what today consumers' needs are. Not only businesses being held to a higher standard, but many consumers are holding themselves to a higher standard as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Various kinds of support are needed when launching social enterprise, while suggestions and advice from investors and customers is very helpful, nothing can be more valuable than advice from social entrepreneurs themselves. The researchers endorsed that rural areas should be made attractive; recently the global concern is how to ensure speedy rural transformation and development. This shift is the concern of many researchers and even governments; this led to the proliferations of many social enterprising, particularly, the Non-profit organizations operating juxtaposed by the government in effort to ensure effective and sustainable rural development. Ensure empowerment to create change, bring together diverse people to create change, and certify communities have a voice and are supported to act. Advocate for social entrepreneurship should seek ways to help people realize they can lead change in their community, regardless of their background. Make it easier for social entrepreneurs to win public-sector contracts, providing leadership and strengthening the use of the Social Value Act. Government should be encouraged to continue engaging with Social Entrepreneurs and the people they support.

Sustenance of social entrepreneurs should be ensured through donations of raw materials, machinery and financial resources from both public and private sectors, this will greatly assist the Government towards the provision of infrastructure and other social amenities, everything possible should be done by Government to raise the profile of social entrepreneurs, the value of supporting social entrepreneurs should be demonstrated to funders, corporate, and advocates for social entrepreneurship and highlight of social entrepreneurs successes should be emphasized, and ensure that social entrepreneurship runs as a wonderful thread throughout the Civil Society Strategy. Access to finance should also be improved; access to appropriate finance is the biggest barrier for social enterprises, the government can increase the impact of civil society by exploring new finance models that support resilience for organizations that are too early-stage for social investment.

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